

Beginning School Bus Driver Curriculum

UNIT VII

Student Management



Unit VII – STUDENT MANAGEMENT

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Unit Objectives

- ✓ **The driver will learn what a positive school bus climate looks like**
- ✓ **The driver will learn how to encourage desirable behaviors**
- ✓ **The driver will learn strategies to build positive relationships**
- ✓ **The driver will learn how to positively enforce safe rider expectations**
- ✓ **The driver will learn how to positively manage inappropriate behavior**
- ✓ **The driver will learn what bullying looks like**
- ✓ **The driver will learn strategies to deal with bullying behaviors**
- ✓ **The driver will learn different behavior management strategies for all student ages and levels**
- ✓ **The driver will learn techniques for de-escalating student behavior**

Introduction

Research has shown that punishment, especially when it is used inconsistently and in the absence of other positive strategies, is ineffective.

Establishing a positive climate on your bus and teaching behavioral expectations along with acknowledging students for following them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding. The goal is to establish a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm.

The State Board of Education adopted a Positive Behavior Support policy in September 2006. The policy states that each school district in Michigan is encouraged to implement a system of school-wide positive behavior support strategies. **Like classrooms, school buses are an integral part of positive behavior support.**

The Michigan Department of Education describes a Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) system as a proactive, team-based framework for creating and sustaining safe and effective schools.

Self Assessment

Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports program begins with a 20-question self-assessment task which helps you to take a closer look at how you respond to conflicts. The purpose of the assessment is to make you aware of your response style. There are no trick questions and no right or wrong answers.

How Do You Respond to Conflict Assessment Instructions:

- Read each of the statements
- Put the corresponding number (1, 2 or 3) indicating your typical response next to each statement as described on the form
- **Be honest – *this is for your knowledge only***
- Add up each of the 5 columns
- The column with the highest total indicates “Your Style” of management as a school bus driver.

How do you respond to conflict on the bus?

(Adapted by F. Mueller Paris and J Randall of Oakland Schools [2001]
From *Creative Conflict Resolution* by William Kreidler

The following exercise helps you take a closer look at how you respond to conflicts.

The purpose of this exercise is to make you aware of your response style. There are no trick questions and no right or wrong answers.

Read the statements below. If a statement describes a response like one you would:

- Usually make, write "3" next the corresponding question number.
- Occasionally make, write "2" next the corresponding question number.
- Rarely or never make, write "1" next the corresponding question number.

When there is a conflict on the bus, I:

1. Tell the students to knock it off.
2. Try to make everyone feel comfortable.
3. Help the students understand each other's point of view.
4. Separate the students and keep them away from each other.
5. Let the school staff handle it.
6. Decide who started it.
7. Try to find out what the real problem is.
8. Try to work out a compromise.
9. Turn it into a joke.
10. Tell them to stop making such a fuss over nothing.
11. Make one student give in and apologize.
12. Encourage the students to find alternative solutions.
13. Help them decide what is important and don't sweat the small stuff.
14. Try to divert attention from the conflict.
15. Let the students fight it out as long as no one is hurt.
16. Threaten to send the students to the principal.
17. Present the students some alternatives from which to choose.
18. Help everyone feel comfortable with my decision.
19. Get students busy doing something like a game or a song.
20. Tell the student to settle it on their own time at school.

| I | II | III | IV | V |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ | 3. _____ | 4. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 7. _____ | 8. _____ | 9. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 11. _____ | 12. _____ | 13. _____ | 14. _____ | 15. _____ |
| 16. _____ | 17. _____ | 18. _____ | 19. _____ | 20. _____ |
| Totals | | | | |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Conflict Response Style Attributes

Each style has positive and negative attributes that may affect how you respond and resolve conflicts on your bus. *What's your style?*

Style I - No Nonsense Approach: I do not yield. I try to be fair and honest with the students. I believe that students still need firm guidance.

Pros: I use a logical and realistic approach. I am persistent to find a solution. I am communicative and firm.

Cons: I may not listen to all ideas. I may win, but "lose" due to lack of cooperation.

Style II – Problem Solving Approach: If there's a conflict, there's a problem. I set up a situation in which we can solve the problem together, instead of battling.

Pros: I encourage students to make responsible choices and produces stronger relationships. I try to be fair and open.

Cons: This may be time consuming and delay solutions. I may not get the best solution. Others may need to make a decision to resolve the conflict.

Style III – Compromising Approach: I listen to the students and help them listen to me and others. I help them give a little.

Pros: Win, Win. I welcome new information. I do not force my values on others.

Cons: We all cannot have everything we want. This doesn't work well in emergencies and may prove difficult to obtain a solution to the conflict.

Style IV – Smoothing Approach: I like things calm and peaceful whenever possible with no drama.

Pros: Reduces the number of conflicts and helps me to remain objective and easy to get along with.

Cons: Problems may be left unsolved and may increase stress from unexpressed conflicts.

Style V – Ignoring Approach: I point out the rules that are posted and leave students to work things out and learn the consequences of their behavior on their own. There are no pros to this approach.

Cons: This does not consider the feelings of others and may escalate hostilities as well as cause students to get hurt. It does not teach students to behave or act in a safe and civil manner.

Why Should I Teach Kids to Behave on the bus?

Students already know what they are supposed to do. Why can't I expect good behavior? A major area of stress for many drivers is student behavioral issues. Historically, student misbehavior results in punishment-based strategies including reprimands, loss of privileges, office referrals, suspensions and expulsions.

Research has shown that punishment is ineffective. Punishment does not teach a student to behave. With PBIS, the driver models expected behavior and reinforces students that follow the bus expectations. Drivers train students in positive social behavior. Everybody has a safe and civil experience on the bus. The driver and the students develop a positive working relationship.

Teaching behavioral expectations and **acknowledging** students for following them is a positive **and effective** approach. Waiting for misbehavior to occur and then responding is too late. PBIS prevents the misbehavior from occurring in the first place.

PBIS establishes a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm. Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports will address a significant area of behavior that affects students and drivers alike. This is a win-win for all!

How PBIS works: PBIS works by establishing a positive climate. By emphasizing and encouraging desirable behaviors and promoting the core values of Respect, Responsibility and Safety the students learn to behave on the bus. PBIS includes teaching and reinforcing bus expectations, providing generous positive attention and reinforcing positive behaviors.

PBIS focuses on being proactive and positive, rather than negative and punitive. PBIS may also spread positive support beyond your students to staff, family and others.

Key elements of PBIS: Includes communication, expectations, reinforcement, reward, consequences and de-escalation.

Communication: Establishes a positive climate. Four times a day you may be the adult in the student's day that says their name and pays attention to the student. You are creating a respectful relationship. Communication provides a way to get to know your students and establishes you as a positive role model. When communicating, be aware of your body language and strive to always remain calm.

Behavior is communication: Behaviors occur to get something, including positive or negative attention, peer acceptance or other tangible items including other's belongings. Behaviors may also occur to get out of something, to escape or avoid ensuing problems including following the rules, ridicule and bullying.

Causes of Behavior: It is not always possible to know what a pupil has faced prior to boarding your bus. It is important to consider problems they may have encountered that may result in improper behaviors. They may include arguments at home or school; no breakfast or no adult to help them in the morning; they woke up late, have no clean clothes; they forgot their medication; they were bullied.

Expectations

Expectations are established based on respect, responsibility, and safety. Expectations must be clearly defined as well as clearly communicated. District school bus rules must be documented, understood, and followed.


Why state expectations? Your student passengers will appreciate limit setting. The students look for correct behavior parameters and an understanding why certain behavior is inappropriate. Give students examples of appropriate choices and consequences when choices made are inappropriate. Allow the student time to think about a decision made that requires action. Always enforce consequences.

The 3 B's of Clearly Defined Expectations:

1. Be safe
2. Be responsible
3. Be respectful

Teach your student bus riders regularly and reinforce expectations often. Re-teach following district breaks and holidays.

Rider Expectations

| <u>Be Safe</u> | <u>Be Responsible</u> | <u>Be Respectful</u> |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• keep everything inside the bus• sit with bottom to the bottom, back to the back• keep hands and feet to self• keep aisle clear• leave all belongings in your backpack• eat and drink somewhere other than the bus | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be on time to the bus stop• go directly to your seat• follow all bus rules  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• treat others as you want to be treated• be a good role model• use kind words• talk quietly• listen to and obey the driver |

Enforceable statements: You only have control over your own actions. Enforceable statements provide direction that allows the student to get self-control over his/her actions and comply with your directions.

- "When everyone is seated, I'd be happy to start the bus"
- "Feel free to eat that when I drop you off"
- "You are welcome to ride the bus as long as others are not being bothered"
- "Those that are safe and respectful are welcome to ride this bus"

Reinforce expectations: The surest way for PBIS to succeed is to make sure that all students receive positive acknowledgement when demonstrating positive behavior. Establish routines and systems for positive acknowledgement and reinforcement. Learn multiple ways to notice and reinforce appropriate student behavior.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is crucial for those students who struggle to behave. They should be noticed and recognized for even the smallest improvement in their behavior. Even students who often demonstrate good behaviors benefit from being noticed by the driver.

Use positive language and actions: Changing daily behaviors of your students requires a bus driver assessment for change as well. It is likely that many of us have used negative behavior controls. Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports will be achieved by using positive language and actions to promote best results in our student population.

Positive attention: Giving students positive attention when they are following bus expectations reinforces their good behavior and encourages them to behave in the future. A positive reinforcement system should be shared at least four (4) times for every one (1) correction of problem behavior. Keep it simple with quick and easy communication with your students. Thumbs up signal, high five, eye contact and a smile or nod are all ways to provide positive reinforcement. It costs nothing and pays you back hugely in a positive climate on the bus. Finally keep the reinforcement system honest and natural; not forced or contrived.

Change your routine: PBIS is a mindset and routine change. Instead of using the negative, "Jimmy, do not get out of your seat", say "Jimmy, thank you for staying seated."

Accent the Positive: Setting a positive tone on your bus and building positive relationships with your students – greeting them, addressing them by name, making eye contact and showing them respect – will increase the likelihood that the students will respect you in return, not thinking of you as "just the bus driver." Be sure to introduce yourself to the students. This will also give students more incentive to exhibit the positive behaviors of responsible bus riders – because they want to keep your respect and please you.

Reward Positive Behavior: Rewarding students' good behavior reinforces that good behavior. 3 to 5 positive rewards should be given for each bus ride. Rewards may include "Bus Bucks", "Caught Being Good" slips, "All Star" awards or just a verbal "thank you for being good." These rewards are often coordinated with the schoolwide positive behavioral interventions & supports program.

Managing Inappropriate Behavior

When dealing with a student's inappropriate behavior: Tell them which behavior is appropriate; explain why it is appropriate; give reasonable choices to improve the behavior with consequences; allow time for the student to make a choice.

Model Desired Behaviors: When dealing with behaviors always remain calm; do not crowd the student's personal space. Watch your body language; avoid doing things that would threaten students, such as scowling, hands on hips or pointing fingers at them.

Your attitude and behavior impact student behaviors: Do not let student's behavior control yours. Always be professional and remain in control, even in difficult situations. Do not show anger; be polite, patient, and firm.

Focus on the Positive: When dealing with inappropriate behavior, start with the positive: "Lately you've done so well, I've been so impressed with your behavior."

Ask: "Which expectation did you have trouble with today?"

Ask: "What could you do differently next time?" or Ask: "How can I help you with this?"

End with a positive: "I know it won't happen again because you have been so good up until this moment. I have great faith in you."

Find Something Positive: For students who regularly misbehave, it can be very difficult to find something positive to say. The more they receive attention for the positive, the less they will look for attention in a negative way.

It is important to remember that the chronic misbehavers often lack belief in their own ability. You need to help them see that they are capable of meeting safe rider expectations. Go out of your way to find something positive to say.

Consequences

A Consequence is: An effective, consistent approach for behavior infractions creating predictability of outcome among students, staff and parents. To fully achieve a positive climate and effect change on your bus you must consistently apply consequences for unacceptable behavior – **for all students**. If your district has procedures in place – be sure to learn those procedures. If your district does not, work with your department to establish approaches to be used on the bus.

When students, parents and staff know when consequences will be enforced and what they will be, they will be easier to enforce.

How do you choose a consequence? You may not have to, let the student. Allowing the student to choose their own consequence can help to reinforce expectations and help them to understand that their choice of behavior and failure

to meet safe rider expectations requires a consequence. Sometimes a student may choose a consequence that may be more severe than what you may have had in mind.

Setting Consequences: Expect the student to think about a consequence appropriate for his/her action(s). Let the student take time to formulate the consequence, and then share his/her idea with you. If reasonable, implement the consequence. The student must understand if no solution is suggested, the consequence will be set by you.

Possible Consequences: Should follow district and department procedures and may include assigned seats with a predetermined number of days to fit the behavior; conference with the student that allows a private discussion about behavior and solutions; bus referral/write up and communication with parents.

Referrals: Are one tool in your behavior support plan. Referrals may be necessary if your efforts to work with the student to improve the behavior are unsuccessful, or if student behavior jeopardizes the safety of the bus.

Use as a last resort: Referrals should be used as a last resort for students who cannot be managed within the bus environment. If you write referrals all the time, you will find that they lose their value both for your students and also for the administration as well. In other words, you want your referrals to mean something and to be acted on as necessary by the administrator in charge of the case.

Attributes of an Effective Referral: Bus referrals should be accurate and objective and written immediately to record the facts as they occur – don't rely on your memory. Only include current behaviors. Be specific; detail the behavior and actual curse words if used. Avoid editorial statements; be consistent and truthful while putting events in sequence. Avoid opportunities to manufacture details.

Use Referrals Wisely and Properly: Write referrals only after appropriate verbal warning. Never write up the whole bus! Recognize desired behaviors by issuing positive bus referrals too.

Applying Consequences: Be neutral, firm, and consistent when applying consequences. Reduce attention for negative behavior.

Delayed Consequences: Consequences given during an episode with a student may cause the student's behavior to escalate. Delayed consequences often force the student to take more responsibility for his/her action(s) and be more effective. When a student is given time to calm down, his/her ability to think and respond appropriately will increase.

What about the Principal? The more you can handle bus discipline issues on your own, the more credible you will be with your passengers and the more they will live up to your bus expectations. If you call the principal on your bus when the

children exhibit behavior issues – you may run the risk that the only time the students behave is when the principal is on the bus.

Five steps – Setting Limits with Students:

1. Explain the behavior that is inappropriate
2. Explain why the behavior is inappropriate
3. Give reasonable choices with reasonable consequences
4. Allow time for thinking
5. Enforce consequences

Set a Positive Tone and Increase Direction Following: A positive tone will increase likelihood of student cooperation. Requests should not begin with stop or don't. Use direct/start requests instead. "Alex, please sit in your seat" instead of "Don't get out of your seat Alex" or "Alex, shouldn't you be sitting down?" Praise publicly, correct privately; establish eye contact; give time to respond; don't nag – follow through; don't yell or argue.

Be sure to acknowledge students who comply with your requests – ***always*** keep enforcing the expected behaviors.

Use of Corporal Punishment: A person employed by or engaged as a volunteer or contractor by a local or intermediate school board or public school academy:

May not:

- Inflict
- Threaten to inflict
- Cause to be inflicted any physical pain; by any means on any part of a pupils body

They may use reasonable force to:

- Protect oneself
- Protect pupils or others from immediate physical injury
- Obtain possession of a weapon or dangerous object from a student
- Protect property from physical damage (MCL 380.1312)

Suspected Child Abuse: The bus driver is generally the first adult that the student has contact with outside of their family. The bus driver must be alert to follow the state's child protection laws.

A person required by this act to report an instance of suspected child abuse or neglect and who fails to do so is:

- Civilly liable for damages caused by the failure
- Guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than 93 days or a fine of not more than \$500, or both
- A person who intentionally makes a false report of child abuse or neglect under this act is guilty of a crime

(Child Protection Law MCL 722.633)

Unlawful Sexual Harassment: Discrimination because of sex includes sexual harassment. Sexual harassment includes:

- Unwelcome sexual advances
- Requests for sexual favors
- Other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature under the following conditions that affects employment, public accommodations, public services, educational or housing by:
 - Is made a term or condition to obtain employment, public accommodations or public services, education, or housing.
 - Submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as a factor in decisions affecting the individual's employment, public accommodations or public services, education, or housing.
 - Interferes with or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive employment, public accommodations, public services, educational, or housing environment. (MCL 37.2103 Sec. 103)

Make Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports your Routine: PBIS addresses the behavior needs of all students with proven, easy to implement strategies. PBIS is doable within a bus driver's schedule and will help to reduce disciplinary incidents.

Bullying on the School Bus

On December 6, 2011, Governor Snyder signed anti-bullying legislation. The bill, Public Act 241 of 2011 amends the Revised School Code to require schools to adopt a policy that prohibits bullying at school. The law is known as "Matt's Safe School Law." (MCL 280.1310b)

Public Act 241 requires district policies that:

- Prohibit bullying of a student
- Prohibit retaliation or false accusation against a target, a witness to or a person with information about an act of bullying
- All students are protected and bullying is equally prohibited without regard to its subject matter or its motivation
- Procedure for notifying bullying victim's and perpetrator's parent/guardian

Know your Policies: "A school employee, school volunteer, pupil, or parent or guardian who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying to the appropriate school official designated in the school district's or public school academy's policy and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures set forth in the policy is immune from a cause of action for damages arising out of the reporting itself or any failure to remedy the reported incident. However, this immunity does not apply to a school official who is designated under subsection (5) (d), or who is responsible for remedying the bullying, when acting in that capacity." (MCL 380.1310 b 7)



Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment on Our Nation's School Buses

Module 1: Handout 1

Note: Numbers within parentheses refer to the source of the information presented in the handout.

See Something: What Does Bullying Look Like?

General definition: Bullying is a problem behavior based on power relationships in which a student or a group of students uses power aggressively to cause emotional or physical pain and distress to another student. (7)

Four Types of Bullying (7, 2)

Put a check mark by how often you see this kind of behavior on the bus.

1. Physical bullying — Hitting, kicking, inappropriate touching, sexual gestures, groping, threatening with/without a weapon.

___ 1 = Never ___ 2 = Occasionally ___ 3 = Sometimes

___ 4 = Frequently ___ 5 = Very often

What the research says about how often this form of bullying occurs:

2. Verbal bullying — Name calling, starting rumors, teasing, threats.

___ 1 = Never ___ 2 = Occasionally ___ 3 = Sometimes

___ 4 = Frequently ___ 5 = Very often

What the research says about how often this form of bullying occurs:

3. Relational bullying — Excluding others from the group, rolling of eyes, tossing of hair, ignoring and shunning, gossiping, spreading rumors, telling secrets, setting others up to look foolish, damaging friendships.

___ 1 = Never ___ 2 = Occasionally ___ 3 = Sometimes

___ 4 = Frequently ___ 5 = Very often

What the research says about how often this form of bullying occurs:

4. Cyber bullying — Use of e-mail, social network sites, cell phones, webcams, text messages, and Internet sites, etc., to embarrass or humiliate, verbally harass, socially exclude, or threaten physical or psychological harm.

___ 1 = Never ___ 2 = Occasionally ___ 3 = Sometimes

___ 4 = Frequently ___ 5 = Very often

What the research says about how often this form of bullying occurs:

Common Signs of Bullying*

There are many warning signs that could indicate that someone is involved in bullying, either by bullying others or by being bullied. As a bus driver, you may be more likely to see some signs than others. For example, a parent would notice if a child is depressed and withdrawn at home, but you might be more likely to see how one child teases another while riding the bus or how a normally happy child you've seen often suddenly seems isolated and frightened. You may see changes in young people that you see every day or you may see patterns emerge over time. Following are some of the common signs of bullying to look for.

- Possible signs of someone who is being bullied:
 - Reports losing items such as books, electronics, clothing, or jewelry
 - Has unexplained injuries
 - Complains frequently of headaches, stomach aches, or feeling sick
 - Hurts themselves
 - Loses interest in visiting or talking with friends
 - Is afraid of going to/from school or other activities with peers
 - Appears sad, moody, angry, anxious, or depressed
 - Talks about suicide
 - Feels helpless
 - Suddenly has fewer friends
 - Avoids certain places
 - Acts differently than usual
 - Wants to sit near the driver
 - Wants to sit with the same "safe" student or group of students all of the time (behind them, in front of them or surrounded by them)
- Possible signs of someone who is bullying others:
 - Becomes violent with others

- Gets into physical or verbal fights with others
- Gets in trouble a lot, including being sent to the principal's office or detention
- Has extra money or new belongings that cannot be explained
- Is quick to blame others
- Will not accept responsibility for their actions
- Has friends who bully others
- Needs to win or be best at everything
- Tries to move near enough to the student being bullied to continue bullying—for example, the bullying student may move near enough so the student being bullied can hear remarks, be touched, or be bothered
- Vies for attention, talks loudly, waves at the driver in the mirror, or moves from seat to seat
- Watches the driver and changes seats to be near the student being bullied when the driver is at an intersection or watching the road

Visit <http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/index.php?id=9&eid=436>.

*Adapted from www.stopbullying.gov.



Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment on Our Nation's School Buses

Module 1: Handout 2

Note: Numbers within parentheses refer to the source of the information presented in the handout.

Do Something: Dealing With Bullying Behaviors

Bus drivers can take steps *ahead of time* to prepare themselves and their students to create a safe and positive atmosphere on the bus that may help keep bullying from happening in the first place.

Bus Discipline: A Positive Approach by Randall Sprick and Geoff Colvin (1992) emphasizes the following five basic rules for managing student behavior on the bus (14):

1. Be positive and professional.
2. Acknowledge responsible behavior.
3. Use consequences calmly, consistently, and immediately.
4. Provide continual supervision.
5. Anticipate and think ahead.

Bus drivers can (4, 9):

- Be up-to-date on their own school district's rules, regulations, and policies for dealing with bullying.
- Make sure all students understand a specific, easy-to-follow set of rules for entering, exiting, and riding the bus and why the rules are in place.
- Clearly establish your expectations for your students' behavior.
- Let students know that if something occurs about which they're concerned, they can quietly give you a note or communicate with you in some other way to let you know what's going on.

A bus driver's attitudes and interactions with students also can help establish a safe and positive atmosphere on the bus. Young people respond well to bus drivers who are (9):

- Firm but not tough.
- Courteous and not sarcastic.
- Equal and fair with everyone.
- Consistent.

Before problems develop, you can:

- **Anticipate what to look for before the bus is in motion:** School bus drivers in one study reported seeing discipline problems increase in the afternoon (when children are tired) and before winter and spring breaks (when children look

forward to being out of school). Anticipation may help drivers be better prepared to keep a sharp eye out for potential problem times and stresses when bullying may be more likely to occur. Post clearly a simple set of rules and reinforce them periodically. (11, 4)

- **Understand the different behaviors and needs of children of different ages:** Successful student management depends on understanding how children's minds work. Although not every child is alike, age and developmental level share certain broad characteristics. Different behavior management strategies are needed for each group. (4)
- **Learn "planned ignoring":** Know when to ignore minor irritating behavior, such as occasional bursts of loud language or minor horseplay. Sometimes children merely want to provoke an adult for fun. But—never ignore potentially dangerous behavior, such as moving from seat to seat. (4)

Students say behavior is more positive when they feel a bond between the driver and students. (6) Following are a few quick tips for developing positive connections with your students (4):

- **Get to know their names.** You may have a lot of students, but use their names when you can.
- **Greet them when they get on the bus.** This can be especially important in the afternoons when they're tired and have had a long day.
- **Be a role model.** Model responsible, safe, and mature behavior for your students. If you want respect from the kids, give it to them. If you want kids to use "please" and "thank you," use them yourself.
- **Keep your sense of humor.** The great majority of children are delightful to be around.

When bullying does occur on the bus, it is best to address it when you see it. It is not always possible or even desirable to stop the bus and deal with an incident, so try these strategies while driving only if it is safe to do so or after the bus has stopped (4, 9):

- In an even tone, give a verbal warning for the behavior to stop.
- When the bus has stopped, move the affected child to a different seat.
- Consider seat assignments in the future.
- After the bus ride, talk to the student who was bullying about his or her behavior in a nonthreatening but firm and even-handed manner. Repeat the rules for riding the bus, and make sure he or she knows the consequences for not following the rules.
- Document and report incidences as required by your school district's policies.

If a behavior escalates and you are concerned (4):

- Call your supervisor about the behavior.
- If you feel you need to stop the bus to deal with the behavior, call in to inform your supervisor.

If you must stop the bus, do so in a safe location, and then:

1. Always follow district procedures.
2. Secure the bus. Take the keys with you, for example, if you need to move around the bus.
3. Stand up and speak to the student or students involved in the bullying.
4. Change the seat of the student who was bullying and/or the student being bullied if needed.
5. Never put a student off the bus except at school or at his or her residence or school bus stop. If you feel that the offense is serious enough that you cannot safely drive the bus, call a school administrator, law enforcement, or a parent or caregiver, as appropriate, to remove the student. You may also return to the school.
6. When intervening, use caution not to challenge or provoke a student who is bullying because it may initiate further negative behavior.

Visit <http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/index.php?id=9&eid=436>.



Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment on Our Nation's School Buses

Module 1: Handout 3

Successful student management depends on understanding how children's minds work. Students are not one-size-fits-all. Of course, every child has a unique personality, but each age and developmental level share certain broad characteristics. Different behavior management strategies are needed for each group. The following are general characteristics and concerns by grade level.

Preschool Children

- Cognitive level varies widely for the same-age children. Some four-year-olds are remarkably mature and can converse fluently with adults; others are still in the early toddler stage.
- Separation anxiety from parents and guardians.
- Often fall asleep on the bus ride.
- May have trouble negotiating bus steps, getting into the bus seat, and fastening safety restraints.
- Our most vulnerable population for transporting.
- Inability to see outside the bus may lead to boredom-inspired misbehaviors.
- Communication with preschoolers must be very simple and clear. Repeating safety instructions numerous times usually will be necessary.
- They can be slow—adults need to be patient.
- Try to go to the child's level when speaking—bend down so you're face-to-face.

Kindergartners

- Like preschoolers, kindergartners display a wide variation in abilities and maturity; for example, on the first few days of school, some kindergartners will be fully adjusted to the school routine, and some will seem like toddlers.
- Five-year-olds have short attention spans and are easily distracted, creating danger especially when loading or unloading. Kindergartners are most susceptible to a "by-own-bus" tragedy.
- May bolt impulsively across the road when they see their parents waiting for them—be careful!
- Physiological development (vision and hearing) is limited, increasing the risk when they must interact with roadway traffic. Ability to judge vehicle speed and distance is very limited.
- Kindergartners who have been exposed to immature adults may demonstrate a distressing command of obscene language.

- Often love their bus drivers and are usually receptive to clear, well-designed safety instruction and positive reinforcement techniques.
- A warm hello and a smile mean a great deal to them!

Grades 1–3

- May be overly stimulated in the bus environment; clear, simple behavior expectations are essential.
- Still enjoy school buses—still a key time to teach them safety fundamentals.
- Often still want to be liked by adults.
- Often demonstrate concrete thinking—right or wrong, no in-between.
- Some exclusion and even bullying of different, delayed, or timid peers may occur.

Grade 4–8

- Becoming independent individuals.
- Great concern with peer relations—while adults’ opinions still matter, they don’t matter nearly as much as those of their peers. Direct challenges in front of the entire bus will often lead to face-saving and increased defiance.
- Self-conscious, awkward, unsure of themselves.
- May shun or belittle those outside the “in group.” Bullying and harassment are prevalent unless adults monitor group interactions.
- Prone to illogical or even self-destructive decisions. May purposely ignore safety rules for peer attention.

Grade 9–12

- Some continuation of middle school issues as they grow into adulthood.
- Further growing sense of self-identity—positive or negative.
- Badly want to be treated like adults, and behavior management is most effective when they are treated in that fashion.
- Still appreciate adult friendliness and connection in spite of outward “coolness.”

Visit <http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/index.php?id=9&eid=436>.



Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment on Our Nation's School Buses

Module 1: Handout 4

Techniques for De-escalating Student Behavior*

Verbal de-escalation techniques are appropriate when no weapon is present. Reasoning with an enraged person is not possible. The first and only objective in de-escalation is to reduce the level of arousal so that discussion becomes possible.

It is important to appear centered and calm even when we do not feel that way. It will help to practice these techniques before they are needed so they become "second nature."

Maintain Control of Yourself and Your Emotions

1. Appear calm, centered, and self-assured. This will help everyone stay calmer, too.
2. Use a modulated, low tone of voice.
3. Do not be defensive—even if the comments or insults are directed at you, they are not about you. Do not defend yourself or anyone else from insults, curses, or misconceptions about their roles.
4. Call the school, your supervisor, security, or the police if you need more help.
5. Be very respectful even when firmly setting limits or calling for help. The agitated student is very sensitive to feeling shamed and disrespected. We want him or her to know that it is not necessary to show us that they should be respected. We automatically treat them with dignity and respect.

Communicate Effectively Nonverbally

1. Allow extra physical space between you and the student—about four times your usual distance. Anger and agitation can fill the extra space between you and the student.
2. Get at the same eye level and maintain constant eye contact. Allow the student to break his or her gaze and look away if they need to.
3. Do not point or shake your finger.
4. Do not touch the student—even if some touching is generally culturally appropriate and usual in your setting. It could be easy for physical contact to be misinterpreted as hostile or threatening.
5. Keep hands out of your pockets and up and available to protect yourself, and stand at an angle to the student.

The De-escalation Discussion

1. Remember that there is no content except trying to calmly bring the level of arousal down to a safer place.
2. Do not get loud or try to yell over a screaming person. Wait until he or she takes a breath; then talk. Speak calmly at an average volume.
3. Respond selectively; answer only informational questions no matter how rudely asked (e.g., "Why do I have to sit here?"). Do not answer abusive questions (e.g., "Why are all bus drivers' jerks?"). This question should get no response whatsoever.
4. Explain limits and rules in an authoritative, firm, but always respectful tone. Give choices where possible in which both alternatives are safe ones (e.g., "Would you like to continue our meeting calmly or would you prefer to stop now and come back tomorrow when things can be more relaxed?").
5. Empathize with feelings but not with the behavior (e.g., "I understand that you have every right to feel angry, but it is not okay for you to threaten me or other students on the bus.").
6. Do not solicit how a person is feeling or interpret feelings in an analytical way.
7. Do not argue or try to convince.
8. Suggest alternative behaviors where appropriate (e.g., "Would you like to change seats on the bus?").
9. Give the consequences of inappropriate behavior without threats or anger.
10. Represent external controls as institutional rather than personal.

Trust your instincts. There is nothing magical about talking someone down. You are transferring your sense of calm, respectfulness, and clear limit-setting to the agitated student in the hope that he or she actually wishes to respond positively to your respectful attention. Do not be a hero and do not try de-escalation when a person has a weapon. In that case, simply cooperate.

Visit <http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/index.php?id=9&eid=436>.

*Used by permission. Adapted from Skolnik-Acker, E. (2008). Verbal De-Escalation Techniques for Defusing or Talking Down an Explosive Situation. Boston: National Association of Social Workers, Massachusetts Chapter, Committee for the Study and Prevention of Violence Against Social Workers. (13)



Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment on Our Nation's School Buses

Module 1: Handout 5

After the Bus Run: Follow-up and Reporting

Your responsibility does not stop when you drop a child off. As a caring professional, you may have concerns about students when a bullying incident does occur on the bus. Some questions you might ask yourself after a bullying incident could include:

- Does the young person who was bullied need attention?
- If so, should he or she be handed off to a school counselor, parent or caregiver, or other caring adult?
- Do I need to tell a waiting parent or caregiver, sibling, or other concerned adult if something has happened?
- Does the child who did the bullying need to be handed off or connected to school personnel, parent or caregiver, or other caring adult?
- How do I feel about what happened and my response to it?
- Do local district policies require filing a written report?

Your local school district's policies may require you to file discipline referrals or reports on any bullying incidences that occur on your bus. Use referrals wisely and properly (4) and follow these guidelines:

- Fill them out completely and legibly.
- Use referrals judiciously—never write up the whole bus!—and only after you have given appropriate verbal warning to the student.
- Report only what you are certain occurred.
- Avoid editorial comments ("Suzy is just like her brother! In fact, the whole family is a problem!").
- Report what you observed as accurately and specifically as possible.
- Briefly explain how the student's behavior was dangerous to himself or herself, or other students—stress the "S-word" (safety).
- Unless school policy expressly forbids it, it is best to write down the actual curse words a student said so that the principal and the parent understand exactly what happened.

You also may have a system for documenting issues to help manage student behavior or use in preparing for letters or meetings with parents, students, and

school administrators. However you choose to document issues, focus on behaviors that need to change by identifying (16a):

- Patterns of behavior.
- Problem areas with individuals.
- Problem areas with groups.

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